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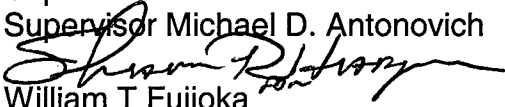
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August 11, 2008

To: Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich
From: 
William T Fujioka
Chief Executive Officer

**MOTION TO OPPOSE S. 3069 AND H.R. 6156, THE EASTERN SIERRA
AND NORTHERN SAN GABRIEL WILD HERITAGE ACT, UNLESS AMENDED
(ITEM NO. 64-B, AGENDA OF AUGUST 12, 2008)**

Item No. 64-B on the August 12, 2008 Supplemental Agenda is a motion by Supervisor Antonovich to send a five-signature letter to the Southern California Congressional Delegation opposing S. 3069 and H.R. 6156, unless amended to include language that would ensure that the Los Angeles County Fire Department retains its ability to implement fire prevention, control, and suppression activities in designated Wilderness Areas within Los Angeles County, and instruct the County's Washington, D.C. advocates to pursue this position on the legislation.

S. 3069 (Boxer) and H.R. 6156 (McKeon), the Eastern Sierra and Northern San Gabriel Wild Heritage Act, would designate roughly 473,000 acres of public land in California as "wilderness areas," including two areas in the Angeles National Forest located near unincorporated communities in Los Angeles County:

1. **Magic Mountain Wilderness**, bounded by Soledad Canyon Road on the north, the community of Sand Canyon on the west, the Santa Clara Truck Trail on the south, and the Indian Canyon Truck Trail on the east; and

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2. **Pleasant View Ridge Wilderness**, bounded by the community of Juniper Hills, Devil's Punchbowl Natural Area, and the community of Paradise to the north, the Alimony Truck Trail and Little Rock Truck Trail to the west, and the Angeles Crest Highway to the south.

Under Federal law, "wilderness" is defined as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." A higher level of protection is afforded to designated wilderness areas, including prohibitions on the construction of roads, use of motor vehicles and motorized equipment, landing of aircraft, building of new structures, and commercial enterprises, except as needed to support allowable recreational and visitor activities. There are exemptions that permit certain of these generally prohibited activities within specified areas, such as a private property owner within the wilderness area would be provided adequate access to the property to ensure "reasonable use and enjoyment of the property." Management activities to maintain or restore fish and wildlife population and habitats in wilderness areas are allowed if they are consistent with wilderness management plans, guidelines, and policies.

S. 3069 and H.R. 6156 are companion bills, which were introduced on May 22, 2008. Neither bill has been marked up yet by the committees with jurisdiction over wilderness issues. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee held an informational hearing on S. 3069 on July 16, 2008. H.R. 6156 is in the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forest, and Public Lands and has not been scheduled for a hearing.

Impact of Wilderness Designation

The County's Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) indicates that the proposed Pleasant View Ridge Wilderness Area would cross over the lower southern portion of the Devil's Punchbowl Natural Area, which is operated by DPR, and that the proposed designation would not have a significant impact on its operations and management of the area. The Department of Regional Planning indicates that the legislation would not have any direct impact on its current planning activities and that the bill is consistent with the Open Space and Recreation Elements of the County's General Plan because the wilderness designation would provide greater protection to the environmental and recreational resources of their respective areas.

The County's Fire Department is concerned that the proposed Magic Mountain and Pleasant View Ridge Wilderness Areas are highly flammable areas which are unlike most national forest, recreation, and wilderness areas because they are located in a high-density urban environment. In addition, the dry Southern California climate, rugged terrain and unpredictable wind conditions pose major challenges in the prevention and control of wildfires. The prohibitions on the use of mechanized equipment, including fire engines, bulldozers, and other firefighting equipment, and on road construction would limit the ability

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of fire agencies to prevent, control, and suppress wildfires in any newly designated wilderness area. The Fire Department indicates that the U.S. Forest Service, which is the Federal agency responsible for fire management and suppression in the Angeles National Forest, shares its concerns. Under a mutual aid agreement, the County's Fire Department shares responsibility for fire control and suppression activities in the Angeles National Forest.

The Fire Department and this office, therefore, support the motion's recommendation that S. 3069 and H.R. 6156 be opposed unless amended to include language that would ensure that the Los Angeles County Fire Department retains its ability to implement fire prevention, control, and suppression activities in designated Wilderness Areas within Los Angeles County.

WTF:GK
MAL:MT:lm

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel
Fire Department
Regional Planning Department
Parks and Recreation Department